

Rebel Privateers

By Timothy O'Brien; Illustration by Doug Shuler

Pirates

To: Moff Gergris, Halthor Sector Command

From: Governor Thanis, Noonar

Regarding: Increase in Piracy

I absolutely must insist on greater Imperial Fleet presence in the Noonian system. An alarming number of pirates has recently been plaguing merchant vessels, particularly those hauling cargoes for Nebula Consumables.

The Noonian system has several large food processing facilities where Nebula Consumables products are grown, synthesized and packaged. The pirates are intercepting 25 percent of all foodstuffs being shipped out of the system. If Nebula Consumables is to continue to supply the Imperial Army with foodstuffs, it will need more protection. I do not have the resources to regularly escort vessels to and from hyperspace jump points, and I certainly do not have the ships to seek out and destroy these pirates.

On perhaps a related note, General Kozar informed me that his men found an abundance of Nebula Consumables products when he shut down the Rebel base on Movris. If the lot numbers on those foodstuffs match the lots from ships hit by pirates in this system, these pirates might be privateers encouraged and possibly financed by the Rebellion.

I await your reply, and more Imperial Fleet support.

Governor, Trophan Thanis, Noonar

Rebel privateers are those swashbuckling rogues of the space lanes, pirates turning their raiding efforts on the enemies of the Alliance. A privateer is a captain of a privately owned ship licensed by a government to capture enemy commercial shipping during war. Many privateers are licensed by the Rebel Alliance to harass Imperial shipping, seize cargo, and pursue the war in space as much as possible.

Privateers differ from space pirates in that they are restricted in their conduct and targets. They aren't like standard Alliance Naval vessels -- they are privately owned, not primarily military, not subject to Alliance orders, and not in the chain of command.



Some Rebel sector commands like using privateers because they are a cheap method of hounding Imperial shipping and acquiring supplies when Rebel ships are few and needed for other missions.

Pirates

To understand privateers, one must first understand pirates. Pirates are nasty cutthroats who plunder unarmed ships, raid defenseless colonies and slaughter innocents. They answer to no legal authority and often no underworld power. Usually.

By Imperial Naval Code, piracy is the act of taking a ship by armed force without commission from a legitimate government. (Note that by this definition many Rebels can be defined as pirates.) Since space piracy interferes with galactic trade, it falls within the realm of Imperial enforcement and is a class one infraction of the Imperial Naval Code, with penalties of five to 30 years on an Imperial penal colony, impounding the ships involved, and possibly execution. The personalities of pirates are somewhat varied. While most pirates are cold-blooded killers, psychopaths, or hardened mercenaries, there are exceptions. There are the occasional merciful but professional pirates, who raid without unneeded bloodshed or damage. Their motivations run from revenge to profit. That being said, most pirates are indeed hard, cold and merciless.

Day-to-day pirating is not the glamorous, profitable and lazy life portrayed in the holos. Even more than on military vessels, the pirate ship needs to be kept shipshape and in fighting trim. A ship's guns and shields need powerload-testing, and engines, thrusters, and a dozen other systems need maintenance. In his spare time a pirate is busy checking and patching his vacuum suit, cleaning personal weapons, and honing blaster skills. A pirate who allows equipment to fall into disrepair is a liability to the crew, and can make the difference in any engagement.

Like a military vessel, discipline is maintained, sometimes rigidly and severely. Pirate captains have a well-deserved reputation for harshness. Unlike a military vessel, there is no backup during an engagement and rarely a safe port afterwards. Weeks can pass without action. If there are no prizes (in the pirate's case, plundered cargo) there is no profit and the crew becomes uneasy. When there is a prize, the ship must make haste to rob and run. Distress signals are too easy for a prize-ship to send. Although response is slow due to the distances involved, a wounded pirate ship can itself become the Empire's prey. On the other hand, a prize filling the cargo bay with booty can make all the difference to a discontent crew.

Also unlike a military vessel, the pirate ship is usually democratic and elects its own officers. It often has a simple set of rules for governing the ship known as "pirate articles," to which every pirate on board has agreed.

Privateering

Rebel privateers are pirates contracted by the Rebel Alliance to harass Imperial shipping. The Rebellion's need for privateers stems from its limited resources. The Rebellion does stage hit-and-run supply raids of its own, but these often stress denying supplies to the Empire by damaging the Imperial supply lines. Privateers stress supply acquisition, and prefer to engage ships of corporations that are pro-Imperial rather than Imperial military vessels.

Privateers inhabit a unique place in the dynamics of the galaxy. They are not usually Rebels themselves, but are pro-Alliance. They are not a huge military force, although they will take an opportunity to strike against the Empire. And they are not pirates, since they operate under letters of marque and reprisal. A letter of marque and reprisal is the contract under which a privateer captain operates. It defines the rules, requirements, restrictions, rights and privileges of the relationship between the Alliance and privateer.

The contract is straightforward: the privateers raid cargo ships, supply bases, and factories of the Empire and selected corporations and surrender a percentage -- usually 50 percent -- of the supplies or profits. The Alliance provides lists of acceptable corporate targets. The privateers' share of supplies is usually theirs to do with as they please, except in the case of illicit intoxicants, which are destroyed, and slaves, who are set free. Frequently the privateers simply sell the booty to the Alliance, especially when the booty is awkward to sell on the black market: starfighter components or heavy artillery, for example.

The privateers are expected to seize cargoes with a minimum of bloodshed, may not attack neutral or Alliance ships, and may not take civilian hostages. They may take Imperial or corporate officers prisoner, to be turned over to the Alliance for prize money.

Privateers are subject to periodic review and often carry Alliance observers: violation of their letter of marque results in its revocation. The privateer then becomes fair game for Rebels as well as Imperials, bounty hunters, and other pirates.

The privateer is often allowed use of Alliance safeports, repair assistance, supplies, and intelligence, subject to availability. Conditional amnesty is usually one of the terms of a letter of marque. Many of the privateer crews are criminals of one sort or another, usually pirates. General amnesty is offered to those who do not violate the terms of the letter. All legitimate actions the privateer committed during the war are just that: legitimate. War crimes are judged and punished summarily. Crimes committed after the pardon are not only punished, but result in the reinstatement and prosecution of past offenses.

Letters of Marque

Letters of marque and reprisal are issued by the Alliance Commander in Chief, Chief of Staff (in the Commander-in-Chief's absence), and the following Supreme Commanders: Fleet Command, Ordnance and Supply, and Sector Command. Sector Commanders in-Chief can, and do, issue Letters of Marque, but these are valid only within their sector and may or may not be recognized by other Sector Forces. In practice, most letters of marque are issued by Ordnance and Supply. Mon Mothma (the Commander-in-Chief) is too busy for less than a pirate fleet, and the Fleet Commander, Admiral Ackbar, personally despises pirates. Sector Commands and Secretaries account for virtually all other letters.

A Sample Letter of Marque

Be it known that Chaeloe Dantin, owner of the private vessel *Dantin's Folly*, is now recognized by the Alliance to Restore the Republic as licensed to conduct raids upon the Imperial government, subsidiaries, and supporters, to capture such cargo, properties and vessels as they may own, and to deliver them unto the Alliance. Further, to capture officers of the Imperial military, government, and supporters. She is also authorized and expected to pursue the war against the Empire as she is able, while in no case endangering the innocent civilian public and without causing undue damage to property.

The owner shall surrender all proceeds of such activities to the review of the Alliance, and in return shall be awarded 50 percent of their value. The Alliance shall also award fixed bounties for the confirmed destruction of Imperial properties.

In return, the Alliance shall render such aid as it can, subject to availability and discretion, including shelter, intelligence, repair, stocking, and fueling. Those members of the crew, formerly criminals, are hereby granted amnesty, so long as they serve our cause, or until the Empire is destroyed, and do not commit further crimes. Should they do so, they shall be subject to all charges, and summarily imprisoned.

All slaves found in the course of duty shall be freed, all illicit substances destroyed. The Alliance may choose to buy an entire cargo, as needed.

This letter shall hold in effect for one year from its date, when it shall be reviewed. If either party is dissatisfied, the contract may be dissolved. The Alliance reserves the right to assign observers to the ship, for the purpose of this review.

Ral'Rai Muvunc
Supreme Allied Commander
Ordnance and Supply

Ship's Articles

Most pirate and privateer ships are governed by a simple set of rules, agreed on by all crewmen. Here are the pirate ship's articles set down by Celis Mott, in his early days as a pirate captain raiding the Nanth'ri Route. These same articles were used throughout his fleet when he united the pirates of his sector.

These rules, often modified, are still in effect among the now divided Nanth'ri pirates, long after Mott's mysterious disappearance.

1. Every crew member shall have a vote, when votes are called, and equal share of provisions found.
2. All booty shall be doled out fairly, under the watch of a group elected by the crew. Defrauding the ship and crew shall be punished by marooning.
3. No gambling or intoxicants on duty.
4. Weapons and vacuum suits to be kept clean and serviceable at all times.
5. No minors or idle family.
6. Desertion of one's battle station is punishable by marooning or death, at vote of the crew.
7. No fighting on board. Personal disputes are to be settled planetside by duel.
8. No retirement or disbanding until every crew member has shared 100,000 credits. The crippled shall receive 80,000 credits out of the public stock, and for lesser wounds proportionately.
9. The captain, engineer, and weapons officer shall receive two shares. The other officers shall receive one and a half shares. All other crew members shall receive one share.

Crew and Starships

Privateers come mostly from unruly stock, sometimes pirates or criminals who wish to reform or retire without the threat of prosecution. The privateer captain is usually a pirate of some sort.

A common feature on privateer vessels is the "Alliance observer," a Rebel officer assigned to keep an eye on the privateer, offer assistance and maintain contact with the Rebellion. Sometimes this observer is a free agent or supply agent, occasionally a bureaucrat, and most often a detached naval officer or mission group agent.

Good technicians figure prominently in any ship's crew, privateers being no exception. The value of a technician in deep space is measured by his ability to effect combat repairs and to patch severely damaged ships together long enough to reach port. Technicians are often

brought along with boarding parties to slice into computer systems, subvert security systems, strip out components, and lend other assistance.

Former bounty hunters, scouts and other types of star-roving professionals are found in privateer crews. Bounty hunters are not found among pirates, due to the standing bounty on pirates and the mistrust this leads to. But they are occasionally found among privateers, partially because of the resemblance of privateering to bounty hunting. Bounty hunters in a crew are almost inevitably included in boarding parties, because of their combat experience. Scouts and other specialists can often find a place on board.

Privateering crews are made up of a wide variety of people who do a dirty job. The Alliance is naturally concerned about the behavior of privateers they contract. Notoriously violent criminals, known cold-blooded and unrepentant murderers and other such people are not acceptable to the Alliance as privateer personnel.

Starfighter-scale vessels are the typical scale for ships used by privateers -- light, medium and bulk freighters as well as space barges. A light frigate or heavily armed light freighter would be a good choice on this scale. Solid strategy and clever tactics are required when using these ships.

Starfighters are sometimes used to add punch to raids. Fortunately for galactic trade, current generation starfighters, such as the X-wing and TIE fighter, are not readily available on the arms market. The fighters most commonly available are the ubiquitous Z-95 Headhunter and less common Gauntlet, with other fighters making up the remainder. Starfighters can make the difference in raids, but their cost is high and they require hangars, deck crews, and constant maintenance.

Capital scale ships are for those who wish to raid container and super-container ships, star galleons, and other capital ships with a chance to survive. The new small capital ships, such as blastboats or gunships, are more suited to this work, being both heavily armed and maneuverable. However, they are reasonably difficult to acquire. They also lack the cargo space to carry away booty. The more commonly available medium ships -- corvettes and frigates -- make up most pirate, privateer and mercenary fleets. Capital ships usually carry up to one year's worth of supplies.

Corellian corvettes are very popular as privateer ships for the same reason they are commonly found in Rebel fleets: they are extremely versatile. The corvette designation is the smallest and least armed capital ship in wide use, with four to eight guns and medium speed and maneuverability. The easily modified corvette can also be refitted to replace a gun mounting with ion cannon or tractor beams (both are tools of the raiding trade).

Frigates are popular but less common pirate ships. A frigate-class ship is fast, nimble, and usually armed with a mix of capital and starfighter scale guns. While some frigate models -- like the Nebulon-B and *Lancer*-classes -- are less available to pirates, there are a number of serviceable older models available. A light frigate designation is often used for a frigate with no capital scale weapons.

Large ships -- light and heavy cruisers -- are even less common, but not unknown, as privateer vessels. This class of starship requires a crew of several hundred, often several thousand. Most of the cruisers in pirate hands are Imperial mutiny ships or are salvaged wrecks.

Mutiny ships are usually in good condition, but often lack enough crew members to control the ship, as many among the surviving crew wish to return home or leave space-faring life.

Salvaged ships must be quickly repaired before other salvage crews arrive. Sometimes wrecks are simply stripped for parts. Most of the outlaw cruisers currently at large are made from the remains of several others. Privateer cruisers often have more than 20 guns, of either starfighter or capital scale, are somewhat slow and less maneuverable, and are well armored.

Targets and Tactics

As mentioned earlier, most targets are commercial freighters one sort or another. These are usually only lightly armed and the main defense is to escape into hyperspace or rely on system patrol. Small freighters are favorites, as they usually carry small, valuable cargoes which are easy to grab quickly and sell quickly.

Larger ships -- bulk freighters and container ships -- are usually only targeted by the capital ship-using raiders, mainly because capital ships have enough space to carry the booty. Large ship typically carry generic, hard to trace cargoes.

Corporate Targets

The ships, cargoes, and space-borne property of the following corporations are considered legitimate targets for Alliance privateers:

Note: (CSA) indicates a contributor to the Corporate Sector Authority. CSA and CSA contributors on this list are targets, but CSA contributors not on this list are not targets.

Any Imperial vessel. This includes ships of the Imperial Navy, COMPNOR, or the Imperial government.

SoroSuub Corp. One of the largest manufacturers and retailers in the galaxy. Headquarters: Sullust. (CSA)

Kuat Drive Yards (KDY). Major shipwright of the Imperial Navy. (CSA)

The Tagge Company (TaggeCo). Owner of Bonadan Industries, Tagge Mining Company, GalResource Industries, Mobquet Swoops and Speeders, Trast Heavy Transports, Gowix Computers, the Tagge Restaurant Association, which owns the Biscuit Baron chain and several macro-farms. Major supplier to the Imperial Governments, COMPNOR and the Corporate Sector. (CSA)

Nebula Consumables. An Imperial military food supplier. Headquarters: Tyed Kant.

Imperial Meats and Produce. A corporation nationalized by the Empire. Headquarters: Tyed Kant.

Zone Supplies, Ltd. Produces security systems for the Imperial Army.

Merr-Sonn Mil/Sci. Heavy weapons, armor, siege equipment, military gear. Subsidiaries: Merr-Sonn Munitions, MerrWeapons. Merr-Sonn Industrial Equipment. (CSA)

BlasTech Corp. Czerka Weapons. Blethern Gas Industries. Norsam Corp. Munitions and weapons systems suppliers to the Imperial Military.

Arakyd Corp. Produces weapons and droids systems for the Empire.

Santhe/Sienar Technologies and subsidiaries. Santhe Passenger and Freight, Curich Engineering, Sienar Fleet Systems. Research, development and manufacture of several Imperial military systems and technologies, including the TIE fighter. Warning: this company has state of the art military quality defense systems. Headquarters: Lianna. (CSA)

Imperial Mining Corp. Imperial corporation with branch offices in several sectors. Headquarters: Coruscant.

Fabritech, Inc. Sensor and control systems manufacturer, supplies Imperial military.

Dreyer Corp. Small arms and tool manufacturer. Supplies the Phoenix Plasma Punch, a boarding tool, to Imperial Customs.

Imperial HoloVision, TriNebulon News, Nova Network. Distributors of pro-Imperial propaganda.

MerenData. Droid and security system manufacturer. Supplies military and interrogation droids and targeting drones. (CSA)

Corporate Sector. The ships and properties of the Corporate Sector Authority.

Tactics

Privateers use several common tactics to capture and board the) target ships. *The Barricade:* A pirate vessel can use a tractor beam to drag a mass barrier -- any object more massive than the target ship traveling through hyperspace -- into a space lane and hope for a rich prize.

This tactic has varied success. Even the narrowest space lanes are kilometers wide, leaving the odds of a ship passing through the right coordinates rather low. When a ship is snared in such fashion, it could easily be a military or heavily armed corporate ship. Using relatively small mass barriers can narrow the odds of such rude surprise, but this correspondingly lessens the odds of netting prey.

Despite these problems the barricade is an old and surviving pirate tactic, used by those who don't care what they snare if the prize doesn't put up much of a fight.

Privateers only use the barricade when they are sure that a target will travel a lane at known coordinates at a specific time.

Lurking the Zone: Space lanes usually enter and exit a system via well-charted jump zones. There is usually a half-hour or more transit time to the planet from the zone. Raiders often jump an arriving ship before it has a chance to defend itself or jump back into hyperspace. Both pirates and privateers use this tactic.

This tactic has certain advantages. The raider can pretend to be an arriving or departing vessel, can pick its targets more carefully and, if a system patrol arrives, the raider can quickly depart from the area. The raid needs to be very fast -- jump zones are high traffic areas and armed help is not far away, assuming a system patrol isn't on post guarding the area.

Dirtside Raid: Well-armed and numerically strong pirates occasionally strike against poorly defended colonies, and similarly advantaged privateers raid corporate and Imperial factories and storage facilities when possible. The profits can be tremendous in either case.

Corporate and Imperial installations are better defended than easily raided colonies. Even the smallest and most poorly defended Imperial installations has a flight of TIE fighters and shields and turbolasers, while corporate installations have Headhunters, Gaunt-lets or IRC fighters and the standard complement of ground defenses. Such targets are rarely taken by assault, and privateers can rarely afford a siege. These ripe plums are plucked by skill and ingenuity.

Code Black Hole

Virtually every ship in the known galaxy has a transponder code imprinted in its sublight engine that identifies it by name, owner and type. These codes are registered by BoSS -- the Bureau of Ships Services. The transponder codes are intended to identify ships and help make piracy, smuggling and other illegal ship activities difficult. The codes act as a nametag -- what robber will rob if his name is tattooed on his forehead?

Unfortunately for the authorities, advancing technology has made it possible to mask or alter these codes. Pirates and privateers use this to their advantage by creating a double identity for their ships. Most of the time the ship uses the "innocent code" with innocuous data. When raiding, the ship uses the "pirate code" with the other name, owner's alias and an identifier code called "code black hole," intended to frighten the target into surrendering.

Rebel privateers transmit a variation of this, known as "code quasar," meant to assure the target of just treatment upon surrender.

Engagement and Surrender

Once the raider has closed to attack range and transmitted code black hole or code quasar, the raid becomes almost formal. The target may fight or surrender. The pirate captain almost always accepts a surrender, no matter how bad a fight has developed. If the ship promptly surrenders the crew is usually not unduly harmed, even by the most bloodthirsty pirates.

A ship that has been captured after a fight can expect the worst. A pirate captain prefers the reputation that he treats the cooperative well and the resistant without mercy. This sort of reputation increases quick surrenders, raises profits, speeds up raiding time, and cuts crew loss.

If the prize resists, as most do, then the raiders' work is cut out for them. Raiders must bring the prize in without too much damage and before it can jump to hyperspace, or the cargo will be lost. Ion cannons and tractor beams are favored for this task. If the prize is disabled but still refuses to surrender, the real work begins.

Boarding Actions

The boarding is the heart of space piracy. A disabled ship is often full of hostile, armed crew members who have taken exception to being attacked. Usually every able crew member on both sides is thrown into the boarding. On large raiders there is sometimes a military-style marine unit used for gunners and boarders.

The first problem of boarding is getting from the raider to the prize. If possible a raider uses a tractor beam or magnetic grapples to anchor the prize in place while a universal airlock is attached. The boarders then charge across the airlock, blast or cut their way in, and take the ship. Shaped charges (and a really good demolitions expert) are the preferred method of entry. Fusion cutters or a plasma punch are also popular keys. In desperate situations a well aimed blaster can be used, but caution is advised: one bad shot and you're floating home.

If an airlock is not possible, another boarding action is to suit up and jump. Many vacuum suits come with basic thrusters which make it easy to hop from one stationary ship to another. Some enterprising raiders try to jump to an unanchored ship, but this isn't a very bright idea.

The main problem with this method of entry is how to get into a sealed environment without evacuating the atmosphere. Most pirates simply blow the airlock or a bulkhead and let the prize crew fend for themselves, but privateers are supposed to avoid wanton loss of life.

The boarders must now subdue the crew, usually in close-quarters, section by section battle! At what point a prize is finally taken is often up to the defending crew -- how long can they resist and survive?

Once the crew has surrendered, been subdued or eliminated, the booty can be collected, transferred and divided according to the ship's articles. In the case of pirates the booty includes the cargo, the valuables of the subdued crew, and whatever they can scavenge from the prize ship itself.

Privateers confine themselves to the cargo in accordance with their letter of marque to maintain their reputation.

Privateer Essentials

System Patrols

Privateers should note whether security patrols are Imperial, corporate, or local. Local patrols are usually single ships which monitor jump zones for several days at a time. A standard class starport has at least two patrol vessels, either of which may be unavailable due to maintenance or repair. In addition to zone duty, a patrol vessel remains busy "running the orbits" between in-system colonies and outposts (if any) and maintaining orbital presence. Patrols cannot be everywhere and patrol schedules are closely held secrets, although an infochant might be able to acquire one at a high price.

A corporate dominated world is patrolled by corporate vessels or not at all (aside from random Imperial Navy appearances). Any stellar class port or better has at least occasional Imperial patrols as well as several patrol vessels of its own. Many Imperial class ports have permanent Imperial Navy facilities and appropriate system security.

Space Lanes

Space lanes connect the systems and link each sector to its neighbors. Almost every sector has a major trade route running through it to other main trade sectors. Each Imperial class port in a sector is connected to the other Imperial class port by a major trade route or equivalent, all well patrolled by Imperial Navy warships.

Most other space lanes in a sector are secondary or worse and appropriately patrolled. Only the boldest, most well armed (or stupidest, most ignorant) raider hunts in a major trade route. The keys to success in raiding space lanes are to remain mobile and disguised, stick to lightly patrolled areas the raider knows well, bribe accurate port informers lavishly and scout independent hyperspace routes.

Criminal Contacts

One of the factors in a privateer's life is other criminals of different natures. Infochants are a regular contact in any raider's life. Infochants are the intelligence network of professional criminals (and privateers). A good infochant has contacts with black marketeers, smugglers, crime lords, pirates, mercenaries, and assassins. A bad infochant sells rumors and lies as much as the truth, is probably selling to and for the local system patrol and may well be selling you! Most infochants fall between these extremes.

Black marketeers and smugglers (often the same people) are another regular feature in privateering life. If privateers don't sell the remaining booty to the Alliance, they must find some way of selling their booty. Black marketeers are the usual answer. Once the delicate formalities of starting up a business relationship are dealt with (setting up the first buy, usually in an out of the way location, with a small group, often not in the raider's favor) a raider sells to the same buyer until circumstances dictate otherwise. Business deals sometimes go bad, or one of the parties might run into "Imperial entanglements" or trouble with a crime lord. These fragile relationships often simply fall apart.

Outlaw Stations

Every illegal starship needs a place to restock, refit and receive other port services. For some ships that have kept a low profile and are not obviously suspicious, this is not a real problem. There are dozens of ports that cater to any questionable ship, so long as it isn't actively wanted. Mos Eisley, Celanon City, and Cloud City regularly service such ships.

Many pirate and privateer vessels can dock in no such port -- they are too infamous, or too obviously outlaw. Outlaw stations are their only recourse. Ports on Korbin, Lanthrym, and Uogo'cor are known to sell services to any ship, regardless of registry, history, or crew. Prices are high, but there is little choice for the raider on the run. Port services vary with the quality of the port, but often a small outlaw station has services even an Imperial class port doesn't offer, such as transponder code alterations, ID forging, heavy weaponry repair for private vessels, illegal specification engines, and no questions asked, for the right price.

The outlaw station is usually a busy place. More and more ships find themselves in need of illegal services. The streets are crowded with smugglers, pirates, infochants, gangsters, black marketeers, port employees, peripheral servicers (like technicians and "entertainers"), the occasional mercenary and a very few (very good) bounty hunters. Uogo'cor, in the Trax Sector, is such a system, hosting space stations that service the pirates of the Trax Tube, a major shipping lane in the Outer Rim.

The Empire snuffs out blatantly illegal stations, when convenient or necessary, but quietly-run stations are often not noticed. Some stations' coordinates are closely held secrets in the fringe community, and those who know them only give them to acquaintances they think will be equally careful. There are a few deep space stations that move locations on a regular basis, ensuring safety. Of course, an illegal outpost is often very dangerous, especially for the inexperienced, desperate, or famous. The population is mostly transient, often dangerous and always outlaw. The best gun makes the rules and violence is part of daily life. There is usually no security force, unless there is a powerful crime lord running the station as part of a syndicate, in which case the thugs acting as security patrols deal with troublemakers as efficiently as possible.

Pirate and Privateer Bases

A really successful raider often builds a base of operations or takes over an existing facility. These bases range from extensive fortified colonies to a single prefabricated utility hut adjacent to a landing pad. In the former case the base might be fully shielded with powerful surface-to-orbit weaponry. In the latter there are no defenses beyond obscure location and small size. In many respects a raider's base is like a Rebel base.

A base is primarily a place to relax, refuel and repair. At its best the base maintains port facilities up to standard class, with a small technical staff, standard spare parts and a fuel processing station. Even the smallest base keeps fuel stores and spare parts.

The raider base is also used to plan operations, store booty, keep prisoners (usually for ransom), and hide from the Imperial Navy. The location of the raider base is always a closely kept secret, often known only to the captain and senior officers. Choosing the location is important and difficult -- it must be close enough to major shipping to raid, but in an uncolonized (preferably uninhabited), rarely visited system.

The Imperial Navy & Rebel Alliance

One of the primary missions of the Imperial Navy is to protect shipping and suppress piracy. Usually the Imperial Navy is too busy suppressing independence-minded systems and Rebels to actually pursue piracy to any great degree. In fact, piracy flourishes in sectors where the Rebels are the most successful, at least until the Empire clamps down with full force. Enforcement actions include the basic patrol, convoy escort, and traps.

Patrols

The Imperial Navy patrols major trade routes heavily. The basic patrol is not intended to capture or destroy pirates. The patrol's main function is to frighten raiders away from major shipping routes so legal shipping is more confined to routes controlled by the Empire. This allows the Empire to easily track commercial activity and keep the large corporations under Imperial protection. When the Imperial Navy does venture out to patrol the minor routes, the ships using those routes are more likely to be illegal and trying to avoid the Imperial patrols on the major routes.

A frequently used patrol tactic is the "post patrol," where a strong force is stationed at each of several hyperspace crossing points, either in deep space or at a well trafficked port. An Interdictor cruiser is often used in deep space to force ships out of hyperspace. All suspicious ships are rigorously searched, their computer records and logs examined and cross-checked, and all crew inspected. The slightest error can lead to arrest or impounding. Any ship that attempts to run is engaged and often destroyed. Destroyed ships are logged as "Rebel" or "pirate," depending on the best guess of the commanding officer.

Escort

Convoy escorts are becoming a much-demanded service. Occasionally a Moff prods the Imperial Navy into performing escort service, and the Navy gathers up as many freighters as possible and assigns a line, usually blastboats or gunships, to protect them. This is a fairly effective tactic, as well-armed ships with low mass will be stopped by a pirate blockade, where a larger ship would not, and can muster enough firepower to deal with the situation.

Traps

An occasional enforcement tactic is to leak information of a valuable cargo to suspected pirate informers and send out a well-armed freighter with considerable backup, such as a blastboat. When the pirates engage the trap-ship they encounter a considerably well-prepared target.

The Rebel Alliance

The Alliance has had mixed relations with privateers since the early stages of the Rebellion. The Alliance was hesitant at first to allow mercenaries with no ideological drive to associate with their cause. After some consideration, and after a few sector commanders took it on themselves to engage privateers to acquire the supplies that High Command could not, Mon Mothma decided to issue letters of marque with restrictions acceptable to her. After a trial period, with mostly favorable results, guidelines were developed so that Ministries could grant letters of marque, with Executive approval.

The Alliance has found privateers to be a useful resource when properly watched after, but does not trust the basically mercenary nature of the privateer captains. Privateers could be a weak flank for the Alliance and they are carefully watched. The rank and file of the Rebellion tends to treat privateers coolly, as employer to employee.

Nevertheless, the Alliance does render services to their privateers, including offering port facilities, ships supplies, refueling intelligence, all at reasonable prices, but only as available.

This appeared as a feature article in Star Wars Adventure Journal #2, published in 1994 by West End Games.